

High School and Youth Trends

Since 1975 the Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey has measured drug, alcohol, and cigarette use and related attitudes among adolescent students nationwide. Survey participants report their drug use behaviors across three time periods: lifetime, past year, and past month; for some drugs, daily use is also reported.¹ Initially, the survey included 12th-graders only, but in 1991 it was expanded to include 8th- and 10th-graders. The MTF survey is funded by NIDA and is conducted by the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research. The 35th annual study was conducted during 2009.²

Positive Findings

Cigarette smoking is at its lowest point in the history of the survey on all measures among students in grades 8, 10, and 12. These findings are particularly noteworthy since tobacco addiction is one of the leading preventable contributors to many of our Nation's health problems.

Between 2004 and 2009, a drop in past-year use of **methamphetamine** was reported for all grades, and lifetime use dropped significantly among 8th-graders, from 2.3 to 1.6 percent. Among 10th- and 12th-graders, 5-year declines were reported for past-year use of **amphetamines and**

cocaine. Among 12th-graders, past-year use of cocaine decreased significantly, from 4.4 to 3.4 percent.

From 2004 to 2009, decreases were observed in lifetime, past-year, past-month, and binge use of **alcohol** across the three grades surveyed.³

In 2009, 12th-graders reported declines in use across several survey measures of **hallucinogens:** past-year use of hallucinogens and LSD fell significantly, from 5.9 to 4.7 percent and from 2.7 to 1.9 percent, respectively; and past-year use of hallucinogens other than LSD decreased from 5.0 to 4.2 percent.

Attitudes toward substance abuse, often seen as harbingers of change in use, showed many favorable changes. Among 12th-graders, perceived harmfulness of LSD, amphetamines, sedatives/barbiturates, heroin, and cocaine increased. Across the three grades, perceived availability of several drugs also decreased.⁴

Areas of Concern

Marijuana use across the three grades has shown a consistent decline since the mid-1990s. **The trend has stalled, however,**

with prevalence rates remaining steady over the last 5 years. Past-year use was reported by 11.8 percent of 8th-graders, 26.7 percent of 10th-graders, and 32.8 percent of 12th-graders. Also, perceived risk of regular use of marijuana decreased among 8th- and 10th-graders, although perceived availability decreased among 12th-graders.

From 2008 to 2009, lifetime, past-month, and daily use of **smokeless tobacco** increased significantly among 10th-graders.

Past-year nonmedical use of **Vicodin** and **OxyContin** increased during the last 5 years among 10th-graders and remained unchanged among 8th- and 12th-graders.

Nearly 1 in 10 high school seniors reported nonmedical use of Vicodin; 1 in 20 reported abuse of OxyContin.⁵

When asked how **prescription narcotics** were obtained for nonmedical use, about 52 percent of 12th-graders said they were given the drugs or bought them from a friend or relative. Additionally, 30 percent reported receiving a prescription for them, and a negligible number of 12th-graders reported purchasing the narcotics over the Internet.⁶

Notes

¹ "Lifetime" refers to use at least once during a respondent's lifetime. "Past year" refers to use at least once during the year preceding an individual's response to the survey. "Past month" refers to use at least once during the 30 days preceding an individual's response to the survey. "Daily" refers to an individual's drug use 20 or more times in the 30 days prior to the survey, except for cigarettes, where the definition is one or more cigarettes per day in the 30 days prior to the survey.

² For the 2009 MTF, 46,097 students in a nationally representative sample of 389 public and private schools were surveyed about lifetime, past-year, past-month, and daily use of drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes and smokeless tobacco. The latest data are on line at www.drugabuse.gov.

³ For information on the health effects of alcohol, visit the Web site of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism at www.niaaa.nih.gov.

⁴ In addition to studying drug use among 8th-, 10th-, and 12th-graders, MTF collects information on three attitudinal indicators related to their drug use. These indicators are perceived risk of harm in taking a drug, disapproval of others who take a drug, and perceived availability of a drug.

⁵ For more information on the misuse or nonmedical use of pain medications or other prescription drugs, please visit www.drugabuse.gov and click on "Prescription Medications" under "Drugs of Abuse."

⁶ Students were asked to report multiple sources, if applicable, in response to where they obtained prescription narcotics.

Monitoring the Future Study: Trends in Prevalence of Various Drugs for 8th-Graders, 10th-Graders, and 12th-Graders, 2006–2009 (In percent)*

	8th-Graders				10th-Graders				12th-Graders			
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2006	2007	2008	2009	2006	2007	2008	2009
Any Illicit Drug Use												
Lifetime	20.9	[19.0]	19.6	19.9	36.1	35.6	34.1	36.0	48.2	46.8	47.4	46.7
Past Year	14.8	[13.2]	14.1	14.5	28.7	28.1	26.9	29.4	36.5	35.9	36.6	36.5
Past Month	8.1	7.4	7.6	8.1	16.8	16.9	15.8	17.8	21.5	21.9	22.3	23.3
Marijuana/Hashish												
Lifetime	15.7	14.2	14.6	15.7	31.8	31.0	29.9	32.3	42.3	41.8	42.6	42.0
Past Year	11.7	[10.3]	10.9	11.8	25.2	24.6	23.9	26.7	31.5	31.7	32.4	32.8
Past Month	6.5	5.7	5.8	6.5	14.2	14.2	13.8	15.9	18.3	18.8	19.4	20.6
Daily	1.0	0.8	0.9	1.0	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.8	5.0	5.1	5.4	5.2
Inhalants												
Lifetime	16.1	15.6	15.7	14.9	13.3	13.6	12.8	12.3	11.1	10.5	9.9	9.5
Past Year	9.1	8.3	8.9	8.1	6.5	6.6	5.9	6.1	4.5	3.7	3.8	3.4
Past Month	4.1	3.9	4.1	3.8	2.3	2.5	2.1	[2.2]	1.5	1.2	1.4	1.2
Hallucinogens												
Lifetime	3.4	3.1	3.3	3.0	6.1	6.4	5.5	6.1	8.3	8.4	8.7	7.4
Past Year	2.1	1.9	2.1	1.9	4.1	4.4	3.9	4.1	4.9	5.4	5.9	[4.7]
Past Month	0.9	1.0	0.9	0.9	1.5	1.7	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.7	[2.2]	[1.6]
LSD												
Lifetime	1.6	1.6	1.9	1.7	2.7	3.0	2.6	3.0	3.3	3.4	4.0	3.1
Past Year	0.9	1.1	1.3	1.1	1.7	1.9	1.8	1.9	1.7	2.1	2.7	[1.9]
Past Month	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.5	0.6	0.6	[1.1]	[0.5]
Cocaine												
Lifetime	3.4	3.1	3.0	2.6	4.8	5.3	4.5	4.6	8.5	7.8	7.2	[6.0]
Past Year	2.0	2.0	1.8	1.6	3.2	3.4	3.0	2.7	5.7	5.2	4.4	[3.4]
Past Month	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.8	1.5	1.3	1.2	[0.9]	2.5	[2.0]	1.9	[1.3]
Crack Cocaine												
Lifetime	2.3	2.1	2.0	1.7	2.2	2.3	2.0	2.1	3.5	3.2	2.8	2.4
Past Year	1.3	1.3	1.1	1.1	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.2	2.1	1.9	[1.6]	1.3
Past Month	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.7	[0.5]	0.5	0.4	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.6
Heroin												
Lifetime	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.5	[1.2]	[1.5]	1.4	1.5	1.3	1.2
Past Year	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.7	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.8	0.9	0.7	0.7
Past Month	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
Tranquilizers												
Lifetime	4.3	3.9	3.9	3.9	7.2	7.4	6.8	7.0	10.3	9.5	8.9	9.3
Past Year	2.6	2.4	2.4	2.6	5.2	5.3	4.6	5.0	6.6	6.2	6.2	6.3
Past Month	1.3	1.1	1.2	1.2	2.4	2.6	[1.9]	2.0	2.7	2.6	2.6	2.7
Alcohol												
Lifetime	40.5	38.9	38.9	[36.6]	61.5	61.7	[58.3]	59.1	72.7	72.2	71.9	72.3
Past Year	33.6	31.8	32.1	30.3	55.8	56.3	[52.5]	52.8	66.5	66.4	65.5	66.2
Past Month	17.2	15.9	15.9	14.9	33.8	33.4	[28.8]	30.4	45.3	44.4	43.1	43.5
Daily	0.5	0.6	0.7	[0.5]	1.4	1.4	[1.0]	1.1	3.0	3.1	2.8	2.5

(Cont'd)

	8th-Graders				10th-Graders				12th-Graders			
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2006	2007	2008	2009	2006	2007	2008	2009
Cigarettes (any use)												
Lifetime	24.6	[22.1]	20.5	20.1	36.1	34.6	[31.7]	32.7	47.1	46.2	44.7	43.6
Past Month	8.7	[7.1]	6.8	6.5	14.5	14.0	[12.3]	13.1	21.6	21.6	20.4	20.1
Daily	4.0	[3.0]	3.1	2.7	7.6	7.2	[5.9]	6.3	12.2	12.3	11.4	11.2
½ pack+/day	1.5	1.1	1.2	1.0	3.3	2.7	[2.0]	2.4	5.9	5.7	5.4	5.0
Smokeless Tobacco												
Lifetime	10.2	9.1	9.8	9.6	15.0	15.1	[12.2]	[15.2]	15.2	15.1	15.6	16.3
Past Month	3.7	3.2	3.5	3.7	5.7	6.1	5.0	[6.5]	6.1	6.6	6.5	8.4
Daily	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.8	1.7	1.6	1.4	[1.9]	2.2	2.8	2.7	2.9
Steroids												
Lifetime	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.8	1.8	1.4	1.3	2.7	2.2	2.2	2.2
Past Year	0.9	0.8	0.9	0.8	1.2	1.1	0.9	0.8	1.8	1.4	1.5	1.5
Past Month	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.5	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.0
MDMA												
Lifetime	2.5	2.3	2.4	2.2	4.5	5.2	4.3	5.5	6.5	6.5	6.2	6.5
Past Year	1.4	1.5	1.7	1.3	2.8	3.5	2.9	3.7	4.1	4.5	4.3	4.3
Past Month	0.7	0.6	0.8	0.6	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.3	1.3	1.6	1.8	1.8
Methamphetamine												
Lifetime	2.7	[1.8]	2.3	[1.6]	3.2	2.8	2.4	2.8	4.4	[3.0]	2.8	2.4
Past Year	1.8	[1.1]	1.2	1.0	1.8	1.6	1.5	1.6	2.5	[1.7]	1.2	1.2
Past Month	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.5	0.7	0.4	[0.7]	0.6	0.9	0.6	0.6	0.5
Vicodin												
Past Year	3.0	2.7	2.9	2.5	7.0	7.2	6.7	8.1	9.7	9.6	9.7	9.7
OxyContin												
Past Year	2.6	1.8	2.1	2.0	3.8	3.9	3.6	5.1	4.3	5.2	4.7	4.9
Cough Medicine (nonprescription)												
Past Year	4.2	4.0	3.6	3.8	5.3	5.4	5.3	6.0	6.9	5.8	5.5	5.9

* Data in brackets indicate a statistically significant change from the previous year.